



Inside Ag

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Spring Eggs



It's that time of year again when eggs of all colors will be showing up in pretty pastel baskets across the state.

Decorated eggs have been very popular gifts to celebrate springtime. Historically, eggs were regarded as symbols of the renewal of life. New parents in China would present their family and friends a red-dyed egg to announce the birth of a child. Long ago, Slavs believed that their fancy decorated eggs, called *pysanky*, helped keep the seasons changing. And today in Mexico, empty eggshells may be filled with confetti and used to make wishes at Easter and other happy occasions. The name Easter is derived from Eostre, who was regarded as the Anglo Saxon Goddess of spring.

To celebrate spring at home, you can dye hard-cooked eggs with food coloring. For each color, put a few drops of the food coloring into a cup of water and add 2 to 3 teaspoons of white vinegar. Then put the egg in the cup until the color is as vivid as you like. Or, use a brush to paint the food coloring directly on the eggshell. A clean sponge dipped into the food coloring will make an interesting pattern when pressed on the shell.

Egg Salad Week follows Easter Sunday. You can celebrate by making deviled eggs or another hard-cooked egg recipe that your family enjoys. For a fun way to celebrate with the kids, try some Bunny-Faced Stuffed Eggs. You can find the recipe at the [American Egg Board](#) website and also learn about the egg's excellent nutritional value while you are there.



May is National Egg Month which is a great opportunity to remind home cooks about egg safety. Eggs should be kept in their original carton in the coldest part of the refrigerator to stay as fresh as possible and be protected from odors. Fresh, uncooked eggs in their shell can be kept refrigerated in their cartons for at least four to five weeks beyond the pack date, or two to three weeks past the sell by date. Hard-cooked eggs should be kept in the refrigerator and used within 7 days. If an egg is left out at room temperature, it will age one week for every day it is not refrigerated.

During the spring, retail grocery stores to be offering eggs in abundance. The Colorado Department of Agriculture conducts inspections at these stores, and at egg wholesalers, to verify that eggs are handled properly and are accurately labeled. These inspections ensure that eggs purchased by consumers are wholesome and of the labeled grade and quality. During an egg inspection, the interior of the egg (yolk and white) is checked by a procedure called candling. Long ago, candling was done by holding the egg in front of a candle in a dark room. Now, special lights are used.

The freshness of the egg can be determined by candling and looking at the size of the air cell inside the egg. Air cells are typically found at the large end of the egg and increase in size as the egg ages. The smaller the air cell the fresher the egg and higher the grade. Grade AA is the highest quality, followed by Grade A and Grade B. Defects such as blood spots and cracked shells, referred to as "checks," can also be found during candling.



Colorado had 3.9 million hens laying eggs in 2007, about one layer per person.

For more interesting egg facts, or to learn how to make your own candler, please visit the [Egg Program](#) on the CDA website. Or, contact the Division of Inspection and Consumer Services Egg Program at 303-477-0093 for further information.